



COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION



Council conclusions on the Commission 2013 report on the application of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and the consistency between internal and external aspects of human rights' protection and promotion in the European Union

*JUSTICE and HOME AFFAIRS Council meeting
Luxembourg, 5 and 6 June 2014*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

" Having regard to TEU Articles 2 and 6 concerning the values on which the Union is founded and as regards fundamental rights as the general principles of Union law;

Whereas the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (hereafter the Charter) has the same legal value as the Treaties;

Recalling Council conclusions of 25 February 2011 on the role of the Council of the European Union in ensuring the effective implementation of the Charter,¹ its conclusions of 23 May 2011 on the Council's actions and initiatives for the implementation of the Charter,² the guidelines on methodological steps to be taken to check fundamental rights compatibility in the Council's preparatory bodies,³ Council conclusions on the 2011 report from the Commission on the application of the Charter⁴ as well as the Council conclusions of 6 June 2013 on fundamental rights and rule of law and on the Commission 2012 report on the application of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union;⁵

¹ 6387/11 FREMP 13 JAI 101 COHOM 44 JUSTCIV 19 JURINFO 5

² 10139/1/11 FREMP 53 JAI 318 COHOM 131 JUSTCIV 128 JURINFO 30

³ 10140/11 FREMP 54 JAI 319 COHOM 132 JURINFO 31 JUSTCIV 129

⁴ http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/jha/131230.pdf.

⁵ 10168/13 FREMP 73 JAI 430 COHOM 99 JUSTCIV 139 EJUSTICE 53 SOC 386 CULT 65 DROIPEN 63

P R E S S

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION:

I. Towards effective and systematic application of the Charter

1. Welcomes the 2013 report of the Commission on the application of the Charter, which highlights important developments and challenges in the effective application of the Charter, including Union legislative actions and the continuous growth of Charter-related case-law of the Court of Justice of the European Union (hereafter CJEU).
2. Underlines that the Charter is the cornerstone for the effective and systematic protection of fundamental rights in the Union framework and is fully binding on the Union institutions and on the Member States when the latter are implementing Union law, while acknowledging that it complements national systems of protection of fundamental rights and does not replace them.
3. Takes note of the evolving case-law of the CJEU clarifying the situations in which the Charter applies to the Member States.
4. Stresses the need for consistent application of clear and precise principles of delimitation in accordance with the respective competences of the Union and the Member States and in line with the case-law of CJEU.
5. Underlines that the Union system of judicial protection, including remedies at national level,⁶ provides essential safeguards for the effective application of the Charter and stresses the need for an effective and systematic application of the Charter on the basis of the mechanisms laid down in the Treaties.
6. Deems that national judges when applying EU law are key actors in ensuring effective judicial protection in relation to the rights provided for in the Charter and notes the increased number of applications for preliminary rulings with specific reference to the Charter submitted by national courts to the CJEU since 2010.
7. Reiterates its commitment to check fundamental rights' compatibility throughout the Council's internal decision-making procedures,⁷ especially in relation to legislative procedures in different policy areas. In that context a strict assessment of the proportionality and necessity of measures that constitute serious restrictions to fundamental rights is required.
8. Recalls that all Union institutions are under a duty of scrutinising their action with regard to the provisions of the Charter and would welcome a renewed determination of Union institutions to ensure consistent application of the Charter in legislative activity. Such a renewed determination has also to be seen against the background of the case-law of the CJEU.

⁶ See TEU Article 19(1).

⁷ See the guidelines on methodological steps to be taken to check fundamental rights compatibility in the Council's preparatory bodies, 10140/11 FREMP 54 JAI 319 COHOM 132 JURINFO 31 JUSTCIV 129.

II. Actions to strengthen and promote the effective application of the Charter

9. Welcomes the adoption of a number of legislative measures in 2013 that further strengthen the protection of rights provided for in the Charter, with due regard to the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, including the Directive on the right of access to a lawyer,⁸ as well as the proposals currently being negotiated that aim at further strengthening the protection of fundamental rights, notably those relating to non-discrimination, data protection and procedural rights in criminal proceedings,⁹ and looks forward to further progress.
10. Welcomes the adoption of non-legislative initiatives promoting fundamental rights, including for example on combating hate crime.¹⁰

III. Consistency between internal and external aspects of human rights' protection and promotion in the Union

11. Recalls that in accordance with the Treaties the Union has a duty to ensure consistency between the different areas of its external action and between these and its other policies.¹¹
12. Recalls that standards of protection of human rights in the Union framework need to be applied, in their respective fields of competence, by the Union, in conformity with the Charter and with due regard for the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, and by the Member States.
13. Recognises the importance of consistency between internal and external aspects of human rights' protection and promotion in the Union framework in terms of enhancing the Union's credibility in its external relations and leading by example in the area of human rights.
14. Recalls that the provisions of the Charter are also applicable to the external action of the Union.
15. Underlines in this respect that the provisions of the Charter are binding on the Member States when they are implementing Union law, and that a number of provisions of the Treaties as well as of provisions of secondary law refer directly or indirectly to fundamental rights and are also binding on the Member States.
16. Recalls that all Member States are parties to a series of international human rights instruments and their monitoring and judicial mechanisms, notably the European Court of Human Rights, and that the rights provided for in the Charter are to be construed as having the same meaning and scope as the corresponding rights guaranteed by the European Convention on Human Rights (hereafter ECHR).¹²
17. Underlines that the Union's accession to the ECHR will further contribute to consistency in human rights' protection in Europe as a whole and recalls paragraph 5 of its conclusions of 6 June 2013.

⁸ Directive 2013/48/EU, OJ L 294. See also recitals (58) and (59) of the Directive.

⁹ With due regard to Protocols 21 and 22 to the Treaties.

¹⁰ Council conclusions of 6 December 2013 on combating hate crime in the European Union.

¹¹ TEU Art. 21(3).

¹² See Article 52(3) of the Charter.

18. Notes the valuable role of the Council of Europe mechanisms of protection in the field of democracy, rule of law and human rights and the importance of pursuing good cooperation with the Council of Europe, while avoiding duplication of work.
19. Considers that under this multi-layered system of protection of fundamental rights both the Union and the Member States ensure internally high standards of protection of human rights that can be further applied to the Union's external sphere of activities,¹³ in accordance with the respective competences of the Union and the Member States, and be presented in a consistent and visible manner to relations with third partners.
20. Deems that further consideration should be given to attaining further progress in relation to the ratification by the Union and the Member States, as appropriate, of international human rights instruments and the implementation of recommendations issued by international human rights monitoring bodies, in particular those of the United Nations, the Council of Europe and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe.
21. Considers that it is important to strengthen cooperation between various Council working groups, notably between FREMP and COHOM, in particular through regular exchange of information and joint thematic meetings, as appropriate, on specific issues.

IV. Streamlining Union action for the protection and the promotion of rights provided for in the Charter

22. Emphasises its own responsibility for the effective and systematic application of the Charter as a key element for upholding the values on which the Union is founded and for promoting a consistent human rights' policy in the Union framework.
23. Welcomes further debate on the application of the Charter and recalls its commitment to continue holding an annual inter-institutional exchange of views on the application of the Charter, based on the annual report on the application of the Charter submitted by the Commission, taking also account of the resolutions adopted by the European Parliament and the annual report presented by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights. Further steps should be taken building on and evaluating current practices, in particular in order to ensure coordination and avoid duplication in the Council's work and to better involve civil society.
24. Recalls its conclusions of 23 May 2011, in particular paragraph 10 thereof, and notes with interest the idea of an annual assessment by the Council on the basis of the Commission's annual report on the application of the Charter of Union action regarding the provisions of the Charter and of pointing out areas for future action. This could gradually lead to a Union internal strategy on fundamental rights, possibly through an action plan on a mid-term basis, regarding the respect and promotion of the Charter. "

¹³ See 14806/11 FREMP 88 COHOM 227.